

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough consideration provided the present application. Claims 1 and 4-20 are currently pending in the instant application. Claims 1, 4, 5 and 10 have been amended. Claims 1 and 12 are independent. Claims 2 and 3 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein. Reconsideration of the present application is earnestly solicited.

Applicants submit that the subject matter of additional claims 12-20 is fully supported by the original written description, including, but not limited to, original claims 1-11; FIGs. 2-4; and pages 6-12 of the specification.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Specifically, the subject matter of claims 3-11 has been indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent format. Without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to expedite the prosecution of the present application, claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable features of cancelled claim 3. Accordingly, claims 1 and 3-11 should be allowed and the present application should be passed to Issue.

Docket No. 0465-1042P

Appl. No.: 10/624,523

Art Unit: 3744

Amendment dated May 27, 2004

Reply to Office Action of March 9, 2004

Page 12 of 15

In addition, Applicants have added claims 12-20 for the Examiner's consideration. Applicants submit that additional claim 12 appears to include the allowable features of original claims 1 and original claim 3 (now cancelled). Accordingly, claims 12-20 should be allowed and the present application should be passed to Issue.

Drawings

Applicants submit that the Office Action Summary does not indicate whether the drawings have been accepted or objected to by the Examiner. Since the Examiner has not provided any indication of any informalities with the drawings in the Office Action, it appears that this was merely an oversight by the Examiner. Accordingly, in the absence of additional indication to the contrary, it is assumed by Applicants that the drawings filed on July 23, 2003 have been approved by the Examiner.

Priority

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of acceptance of the certified copies of the corresponding priority documents for the present application. Accordingly, no further action is required by Applicants with respect to Applicants' claim for priority.

Minor Informalities

Applicants have voluntarily made amendments to claims 1, 4, 5 and 10 to address potential informalities with the claims. However, Applicants submit that these non-narrowing amendments have not been made responsive to any statutory rejection advanced by the Examiner.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Liu (U.S. Patent No. 6,050,101). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In light of the foregoing amendments to the claims, and as indicated by the Examiner, claim 1 should be allowed. Without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to expedite the prosecution of the present

Docket No. 0465-1042P
Appl. No.: 10/624,523
Art Unit: 3744
Amendment dated May 27, 2004
Reply to Office Action of March 9, 2004
Page 14 of 15

application, claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable features of cancelled claim 3. Accordingly, claims 1 and 3-11 should be allowed and the present application should be passed to Issue.

As to the dependent claims, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable due to their dependence upon an allowable independent claim, as well as for additional limitations provided by these claims.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but rather to merely show the state-of-the-art, no further comments are necessary with respect thereto.

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Matthew Shanley, Registration No. 47,074 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

Docket No. 0465-1042P

Appl. No.: 10/624,523

Art Unit: 3744

Amendment dated May 27, 2004

Reply to Office Action of March 9, 2004

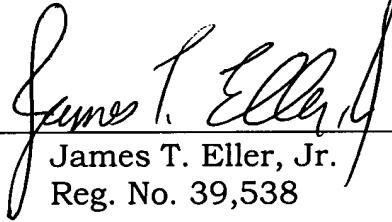
Page 15 of 15

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By


James T. Eller, Jr.

Reg. No. 39,538


JTE/MTS/cl

P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703)205-8000